

Extracts from Tony Hanna Speaking about the Ceist Charter at Annual Conference

...Great charters, like great speeches, have a lot to do with great people. The personas, the character of these women and men add weight and calling power to their words. Their message is convincing not just because of its evocative language, not only because of its ring of truth but also because the speaker, the witness was someone of conviction, of integrity, someone whose very presence persuaded us of the truth of their presentations. The messenger is always the medium of the message. The original carriers of this message, the founders of the various congregations were people who witnessed by their lives. The message is as much about the carrier as it is about the content. As Pope Paul VI said, "Today people believe in witnesses rather than teachers and if they believe teachers it is because first of all they are witnesses". As always the one who delivers the message, the one who carries the charter - or should we say the one who lives the Charter - is critical.

...This is a fine document, the fruit of huge consultation between all the partners within the Ceist family. It has gone through a number of edits, it has been painstakingly reviewed by a variety of critics, it has been eloquently written by a professional and inspirational select group. In its own way it is a work of art and inspiration. It speaks of dreams and hopes, it speaks of challenges and obstacles; it has aims and objectives, it has invitations and expectations. Yet it could remain just a glossy brochure. It will look good on tables when we host open days for parents, it will seem appropriate when we use it perhaps in an offertory procession during a graduation mass, some of its content even may pepper speeches made to students, staff and parents.

To be a real charter it must be owned and lived by those who lead...Some may be like the rich young man (Mt.19:16-26) and be attracted to the charter but feel it makes too many demands. We may have to give up too much. Perhaps we have become comfortable with our riches, comfortable with our academic exam results, comfortable with our selective intakes, comfortable with our fee-paying cohort, comfortable with our diluted attitude towards religion, less demanding of ourselves and others within the new dispensation, one which advocates tolerance and bonhomie towards all. Perhaps there has been too

much *caritas* at the expense of *veritas*. It has been easier to go with the flow, to be all things to all men, to retire into a private religiosity or a personal spirituality and eschew the public manifestations of what it is to be ‘Catholic’. The unmistakeable call to the truth is what Jesus was about and the charter that we seek to work under calls us to the truth of Catholic education.

...The Charter is the map that calls us to live the gospel, to allow our schools be places of hospitality where all are welcome into the Catholic family, where we treasure our traditions, where we seek the truth unashamedly, not only intellectual measurable truth but the deeper truths of existence by which we are measured. The charter calls us to excellence in academia, excellence in pastoral care, excellence in sport, excellence in spirituality, excellence in truth.